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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000463

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STATE FOR AF/RSA, INR/AA, DOC FOR ITA, DOT FOR MARAD

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [ETDR](#) [PGOV](#) [EWWT](#) [KCRM](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES SEAFARERS'
DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

REF: A. LAGOS 409
[1](#)B. LAGOS 434

Classified By: Consul General Donna M. Blair, Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: The Nigeria Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) has launched an initiative to increase the number of Nigerians engaged in maritime trades by training 5000 Nigerians overseas and expanding domestic training facilities. In the long term, Nigeria wants to become a net exporter of seafarers, seeing this as a means of easing unemployment and diversifying foreign exchange earnings, and to expand the domestic fleet as well as introduce a shipping registry. The Chief of Naval Staff denies that piracy has occurred in Nigerian waters during the last six months. Nigeria appears to underestimate the difficulties of developing a domestic maritime industry. End Summary.

Training Merchant Marine Officers Abroad

[1](#)2. (U) On November 5, PolOff met with the Director General of the Nigeria Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Dr. Ade Dosunmu, to discuss the "Nigerian Seafarers' Development Program" launched to increase the number of Nigerians engaged in maritime trades. Dosunmu explained that in the short term, the program seeks to train 1,000 Nigerians per year for the next five years using existing training facilities for merchant navy officers around the world. Mid-term, Nigeria wishes to open three new maritime academies to supplement the existing academy at Oron and to improve facilities at Oron in order to provide a steady flow of qualified mariners in the future. According to Dosunmu, in the long term Nigeria aims to become a net exporter of trained seamen to the international shipping industry similar to the Philippines, while at the same time expanding its national fleet and developing a ship registry similar to Liberia's.

[1](#)3. (U) According to Dosunmu, the Federal Government has allocated a budget for the training of 5,000 Nigerian merchant navy officers over the next five years of USD 10,000 per student, which represents 60 percent of the estimated costs of training. The state governments are being asked to supply the remaining 40 percent for each candidate from their state. Candidates are being recruited nationwide with careful reference to the "Federal Principal." (Note: this means that each state will have an equal contingent of candidates and poorer qualified candidates from a state which has not filled

its quota will be preferred to better qualified candidates from states where qualified candidates exceed the quota. Only if the states pay extra, will they be able to exceed their quote of cadets. End note.) To date, Nigeria has only had contact with Malaysia and Vietnam about training, but Dosunmu said NIMASA would welcome the opportunity to send cadets to U.S. maritime academies.

Expanding Domestic Training Capacity

4.(U) During these next five years, Nigeria plans to build up domestic training capacity by opening three new maritime academies at Badagry, Lagos State, Lakoja, Kogi State, and Oguta, Imo State, according to Dosunmu. (Note: two of these locations are land-locked. End note.) Dosunmu said his administration is also looking into the possibility of acquiring a single training ship for use by all four schools.

He admitted that the staff for the academies will have to be recruited internationally, but he expressed the hope that much of the infrastructure needed such as specialized training equipment can be shared between the academies.

Exporter of Seafarers to International Shipping Industry

15. (U) In the long term, Dosunmu expects Nigeria to become an exporter of qualified seafarers to the international shipping industry which is facing a serious and increasing deficit of personnel as the merchant fleet expands and existing crew age and retire. (Note: the United Nations Conference on Trade

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and Development (UNCTAD) reported recently that the merchant fleet increased by 7 percent this year and 10,053 ships are currently on order. End note.) Dosunmu, pointing to the example of the Philippines, estimated that maritime trades could account for 150,000 new jobs, and generate significant foreign exchange earnings.

Chief of Naval Staff Denies Piracy in Nigerian Waters

16. (C) In response to a comment by PolOff that recent incidents of piracy detracted from Nigeria's maritime image, Dosunmu put a call through directly to the Chief of Naval Staff and asked him to speak to PolOff. The Chief of Naval Staff categorically denied that there had been any incident of piracy in Nigerian waters in the past six months. (Note: this contradicts information received from a variety of other sources (see Refels 409, 434) and international press reports. End note.)

17. (C) Comment: While the Nigerian goals are laudable given the very real worldwide shortage of qualified seafarers, Nigeria appears to underestimate the difficulties of developing a domestic maritime industry. The only existing maritime academy, which PolOff visited in August, does not have a dedicated training ship and all graduates leave the academy without ever having set foot aboard a vessel. Furthermore, staff qualifications and training facilities do not meet the standards required for graduates to obtain international recognition. Plans to locate two new maritime academies at land-locked locations suggests that the Nigerians underestimate the importance of experience at sea in obtaining internationally recognized qualifications for the graduates of their training institutions, and the difficulties in hiring qualified staff with maritime experience for onshore training as well. End comment.

BLAIR